

## **MONTANA WOLF PROGRAM WEEKLY REPORT**

To: Interested Parties

From: FWP Wolf Program Coordinator, Carolyn Sime (406-461-0587)

Subject: Wolf Program Activities and Related Information, March 27 – April 2, 2010

Contributors to the Montana Wolf Weekly are Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Universities, USDA Wildlife Services (WS), the National Park Service (NPS; Glacier NP; Yellowstone National Park will be reported in the Wyoming Wolf Weekly), US Forest Service, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and the Blackfeet Nation.

Highlighted activities relate to: monitoring, wolf – livestock interactions, outreach and education, research, law enforcement, and other miscellaneous topics of public interest. The Weekly Report will be available on each Monday, covering the previous week. It and other wolf program information (including the 2008 annual report) can be found on the FWP website.

NOTE: FWP has recently redesigned and reorganized its Website. The Wolf Program Home Page can be found at <http://fwp.mt.gov/wolf>. If you get an error page, go to the FWP Home page and look for Montana Wolves under Fish & Wildlife.

### **Wolf Monitoring Activities**

On 4/2, Ross and Asher successfully helicopter-darted two adult male wolves from the Beartrap pack. This was accomplished concurrent to efforts to dart and radio collar elk for an elk research project.

FWP announces the availability of the 2009 Annual Report. A media release and the FWP Quick Facts Summary are available at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wolf>. The full report can be found by scrolling down the Wolf Program Home page to Reports // look for 2009 Annual Report or click on the photo link for 2009 Annual Report.

FWP is taking applications to fill several volunteer positions to help FWP with wolf monitoring during the upcoming field season. Volunteers investigate public and agency wolf reports and help with trapping efforts. Volunteers are expected to get underway sometime in April and wrap up by June 30. An extension past June 30 is possible but depends on funding availability. Volunteers need not stay the whole time. Learn more at: [Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks: Gray Wolf Volunteer Opportunity](http://fwp.mt.gov/doingBusiness/employment/wolfVolunteers.html). (<http://fwp.mt.gov/doingBusiness/employment/wolfVolunteers.html>)

Flights: None this week.

### **Wolf - Livestock Activities**

On 3/27, WS confirmed that wolves killed a calf on private land near Wisdom. This area was previously occupied by the Battlefield pack and had several confirmed depredations and lethal removals over the past years. At the end of 2009 the Battlefield pack was lethally removed because of multiple livestock conflicts, one wolf that remained joined the Miner Lakes pack. The Bender pack quickly back filled into this area in 2010 and was confirmed to be involved with depredations as well. WS attempted to lethally remove the entire Bender pack, one collared wolf remained. Despite recent lethal efforts in March, livestock conflicts have not stopped or decreased. This area of the Big Hole

has seen extensive pack territory shifts and wolf movements due to wolf high wolf mortality from management actions and the hunting season compared to other areas. New dispersing wolves may have moved into this area or near packs could have expanded into the vacant territory. Tracks of 2-5 wolves have been seen in the past months in the area by FWP, WS and local producers. WS has been authorized to lethally remove the pack occupying this area. This area has historically been an area of rapid back fill after lethal removals and has been known as an area of higher conflict with wolves and livestock. FWP and WS will attempt to place an electric fence and fladry on the calving grounds on a ranch where most of the cattle losses in the last two years have occurred.

On 3/29, WS confirmed that a calf was killed by a wolf or wolves on private land near Polaris. On 3/31, WS confirmed that wolves killed a second calf on a different ranch / private land near Polaris. WS had already been authorized full pack removal for the Horse Prairie pack. The 45-day period to will be renewed as of 3/31. The Horse Prairie pack radio collar was heard near the depredation site. Earlier this year, the Horse Prairie pack was confirmed to have killed two calves. Additionally this pack has several other confirmed incidents in 2009. Management actions with lethal removal of wolves from the Horse Prairie pack had some success in 2009, but livestock conflicts have persisted with the remaining members. WS has been authorized to lethally remove the remaining two members of the Horse Prairie pack. A SOS permit has been authorized to the livestock producers.

On 4/1, the Candy Mountain pack ran and tested cattle on a ranch in the Yaak (northwest corner of MT). A combination of WS control and kill permit for the producer for up to 2 wolves has been authorized.

### **Outreach and Education**

On 3/26, Bradley and FWP Wildlife Program Manager Thompson gave a talk at the Bitterroot Outfitters and Guides at the Trapper Creek Job Corps. About 25 people attended.

On 3/30, Sime gave a presentation for the graduate student seminar Human Dimensions of Fish and Wildlife Management at Montana State University. About 15 people attended.

### **Research Activities**

Nothing to report.

### **Law Enforcement and Related Activities**

On 3/27, a wolf was found dead south of Butte in the Highlands. Details surrounding the wolf's death are currently under investigation.

### **Other Updates**

#### *Northern Rockies Delisting Litigation in Missoula Federal Court*

Montana's interests in support of delisting have been represented and brought forward through efforts by FWP in consultation with the Montana Attorney General's Office. FWP filed its last written brief on 1/28.

FWP argued that: 1. for a variety of reasons, it is lawful for USFWS to establish different levels of protection for a species, subspecies or Distinct Population Segment under the Endangered Species Act; 2. the facts show that Montana's existing regulatory mechanisms will keep wolf populations well above the federal recovery criteria and encourage connectivity; 3. sufficient genetic exchange has taken place and will continue; and 4. Montana's hunting season is not a basis for relisting the gray wolf.

At this time, a hearing for oral arguments has not been scheduled. One could be scheduled at any time, but there is no requirement for an oral hearing.

Montana Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board:

The USFWS announced availability of \$1 million in grants that will be distributed to 10 states under a new demonstration program designed to help livestock producers undertake proactive, non-lethal activities to reduce the risk of livestock loss from predation by wolves, or to compensate livestock producers for livestock losses caused by wolves. The Wolf Compensation and Prevention Program legislation was initially sponsored by Montana Senator Tester with eventual cosponsors signing on from many other states with wolf populations. The program provides funding to states and tribes, with federal cost-share not to exceed 50 percent. Funds will be expended between proactive and compensatory activities. States and tribes will be able to use the funds to support qualifying non-lethal projects that reduce the risk of livestock loss from predation by wolves, or to compensate livestock producers for livestock losses caused by wolves. Tribal funding for the program will be announced at a later date.

The funding allocation was determined by considering depredation of livestock by wolves, the number of wolves in each state, and need in each state. Montana is eligible for \$140,000 and must match the federal dollars 50:50. This grant will be discussed at the upcoming Board meeting on April 9.

The Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board will meet on April 9<sup>th</sup>, Room 152 of the State Capitol in Helena. The agenda for this meeting is available at the Board's website [www.llrmb.mt.gov](http://www.llrmb.mt.gov). Look under Board and Meetings on the left navigation bar. The LLRMB board meeting will be broadcast over the internet. A link to the meeting will be posted on [www.llrmb.mt.gov](http://www.llrmb.mt.gov) at about 9:45am or shortly thereafter just before the 10am meeting start time.

A couple of items of interest on the agenda will be outreach, fundraising, administrative rules, USDA WS specialist on prevention and USDA Farm Service Agency personnel to explain details on Notice LDAP-20. LDAP-20 is an amendment to the 2008 Farm Bill to provide emergency assistance for livestock losses (ELAP).

The agenda and minutes from previous meetings are available at [Montana Department of Livestock](http://MontanaDepartmentofLivestock). The program coordinator can be reached at 444-5609.

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To learn more about Montana's wolf population, the Montana program and to help FWP monitor wolves by reporting wolf sign, visit FWP online. Use the following shortcut link and be sure to update your bookmarks: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wolf>.

To anonymously report a dead or injured wolf or suspected illegal activity, call: 1-800-TIP-MONT.

To request an investigation of injured or dead livestock, call USDA Wildlife Services directly in western Montana / Helena area at 458-0106 or in eastern Montana at the statewide office: 657-6464. Or, call your nearest FWP representative to have your call referred to Wildlife Services.

If you have a confirmed or probable livestock death loss due to wolves, USDA Wildlife Services will supply you with a copy of the Loss Reimbursement Application form. For more information, see <http://liv.mt.gov/liv/LM/index.asp>. Or, contact the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program Coordinator George Edwards at the Montana Department of Livestock at 444-5609.